

## [Knox]

W15464

(Dup of W15459) 1 Conn. 1938-9 Knox

"Bill" Knox, knifemaker "off and on" for forty two years last week was forced much against his will—for he is proud and independent—to accept town aid, in return for which he works two or three days weekly on the roads. But today he is at leisure, and I find him sitting on the stone stop of the fire house, his back propped against the wooden railing, talking to Mr. Brennan.

"Hi kiddo," he says, as I approach. "This young fella was askin' me just the other day about knifemakin', Chris. Say, young fella, here's a tip for you. You go down to the Bridge, and there's a fella visitin' Fisher's from Waldron, New York. He kin tell you all about business up there. Don't know how they're doin' now, but they was a time when they was two-three shops up there, goin' strong. But las' time I was up there—three-four years ago one of 'em was shut down. Windas broke out of it and all. Nice-lookin', big brick place, too."

Mr. Brennan: "Funny how that knife business went to hell, wasn't it? Mr. Knox: "Hain't nothin' funny about it. 'twas the goddam foreign knives and the new machinery. Between the two of them. And now there's a damn good trade all shot to hell, and nothin' to take its place. Ole punks like me havin' to go on relief. We could be workin' if the trade was any good yet, and teachin' it to our kids. Hain't nothin' to do but work fer the town, and go fishing in yer spare time. Spare time drives me nuts. I got so goddam much spare time, and nothin' to do, I swear I'll go nuts."

Mr. Brennan: "How's the fishin', Bill?"

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Mr. Knox: "Why, Chris, so help me, the fish hain't even bitin'. Never seed 'em so bad. Went up to Northfield Saturday night. Caught 2 two lousy bullheads. Thought I'd git me enough for Sunday dinner, Hell, two bullheads hain't enough for me and the kid."

Mr. Brennan: "Maybe you ain't usin' the right kinda bait. Whaddya use?"

Mr. Knox: "Worms. The bait's all right. Fish hain't gittin' so fussy they won't bite worms, air they? If they air, I'll give up. Nosir, it's the goddam lakes and ponds workin', that's why they hain't bitin. And speakin' about worms. Funny thing happened. You know I dug five-six hundred of 'em couple weeks ago. Put 'em down cellar. Coupla days they was gone. I got so goddamn mad. Figgered somebody come in there and took 'em. Anyway I went out and dug some more. Says to myself by Cripes if they's anybody gittin' in my cellar I'll fill his rear end so fulla buckshot they kin use him fer an anchor. And I set up coupla nights with the old shotgun waitin', but I fell asleep fin'ly. Went down the cellar second day, and by God, if they hain't disappeared agin. Pail is knocked over, dirt's layin' all around, but the worms are gone.

"Met a fella that afternoon —told him what happened. He says, 'You got any rats in your cellar?' I says, 'sure, I got some dandies. Some of the finest specimens you ever see.' He says, 'that's where yer worms are goin'. Rats. Eat 'em every time.' Well, by God, 'twas the first time I ever heard of rats eatin' worms, I couldn't hardly believe it. But more I thought of it, the more I c'd believe it. I put the next batch in the kitchen. Hain't lost a one since."

Mr. Brennan: "You'll be gettin' rats in the kitchen, next. They'll come after 'em."

Mr. Knox: "Well's long as they eat the worms. It's a damn sight 3 easier fer me to git worms than grub, somehow er other. Maybe the rats are gittin' hard up these days, too. Maybe eatin' worms is a new experience fer them."

Mr. Brennan: "I guess they'll eat anything they can chew."

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Mr. Knox: "Seems so. " He rubs his nose, closes one nostril with his thumb and blows heartily. "God, they's an awful lot of cars on the road fer hard times."

Mr. Brennan: "Oh, times ain't so hard with some."

Mr. Knox: "How's things at the mill?"

Mr. Brennan: "Just so-so. I seen 'em a lot better and a lot worse. We'll maybe only get three days this week. You never know."

Mr. Knox: "Well, every time I thinks what happened to the knife business, I boil. It makes me boil. I been thinkin' about it ever since this fella ast me about it the other day."

Mr. Brennan: "Well, you might's well stop boilin', Bill. It's gettin' too hot."